



Personal Preparedness for Individuals with Disabilities: Sheltering in Place and Evacuation

This guide is a starting point to personally prepare for a disaster. More information will be needed depending on the type of hazard and one's functional needs. There is a tendency to avoid thinking about emergencies, and this can produce greater consequences for people with disabilities than for people without disabilities. It is extremely important that in any emergency one is able to shelter in place for at least 72 hours before rescue personnel arrive. It should also be understood that personal preparedness is a process rather than an endpoint, so ongoing considerations need to be taken in order to ensure safety. This fact sheet contains suggested guidelines that may vary depending on one's own personal health preparedness capabilities.

☑ Checklist for Necessary Items to Shelter in Place or Evacuate

SELF ASSESSMENT

- Assess individual capabilities. Not everyone has the same needs.
- What form of evacuation is most comfortable? What are possible options?

STAY INFORMED

Those who stay informed and seek out information and resources are more ready to face a disaster.

- Research the potential hazards that may impact your community (e.g., blizzards, earthquakes, tornados, hurricanes, or floods).
- Consider joining a registry to inform local emergency planners of your functional needs; look into neighborhood and community emergency preparedness activities and trainings.
- Notify local utility providers about your needs for backup or priority restoration of power if you have power-dependent medical devices.

CREATE A PERSONAL SUPPORT NETWORK

Build a support team of people who will help in an emergency. Provide them with instructions as they will be best suited to help in a time of crisis. Support teams can include friends, family, co-workers, or caretakers.

- Make sure everyone knows how you plan to respond to a disaster.
- Provide people in your network with an extra set of keys to your home in case of an emergency.
- Have a transportation plan and resources to evacuate when needed.
- Identify redundant methods of communication, make a plan, and tell your network. Have another way to charge cell phones in the event power is out; hang a warning flag outside your home to alert your network or responders, etc.
- Have at least one out-of-state contact and provide a copy of all important documents and medications to this person.

COLLECT IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS AND PRESCRIPTIONS

The following is a list of important documents to maintain. Consider putting these documents in a fire-safe/water-proof container. A summary of medical needs is especially important so that rescue personnel can best meet your needs.

Emergency Information Forms: *A summary of prescriptions, medical conditions, and special health care needs is necessary to reduce delays and will help responders. Contact your doctor or someone in your personal support network to help complete your emergency information form, which could include:*

- Descriptions of disabilities, medical conditions, and/or functional needs.
- List of medications and medical supplies needed.
- List of procedures, treatments, and allergies.

Do:

- create an individual emergency plan
- assemble a "go kit"
- check accessibility of local shelters
- keep a portable generator or back-up cell phone battery

Don't:

- wait until it happens to you
- leave out those who can assist you in the planning process
- forget a flashlight, radio, and two routes for evacuation
- think it won't happen to you
- procrastinate with safety

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Important Documents: *Keep in a safe area and send copies as appropriate to your out-of-state contact.*

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Copies of prescriptions | <input type="checkbox"/> Insurance card |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Credit card and bank information | <input type="checkbox"/> Wills/deeds |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social security cards | <input type="checkbox"/> Immunization records |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cash/travelers checks | <input type="checkbox"/> Licenses/birth certificates/passports |

EVACUATION ROUTES

- Contact your local emergency management office for locations of sheltering facilities and evacuation routes; information about state emergency management is available at <http://www.fema.gov/about/contact/statedr.shtm>.
- Identify at least two routes from home to shelter or work to shelter.
- Pre-plan your evacuation route from work. Contact your building manager for assistance.
- Use your personal network to make transportation accommodations.

SURVIVAL KIT

Make sure that your survival kit contains items that will meet daily functional needs. Have a plan for medical treatments and medications.

- Life-support devices that depend on electricity: Contact your local electric company about power needs for life-sustaining devices (home dialysis, breathing machines, etc.) in advance. Some companies can put you on a “priority reconnection service” list. Let the local fire department know that you are dependent on life-support devices. If possible, obtain a means of back-up power (generator, batteries, etc.) in the event the power is out.

MEDICATIONS

- Ask your doctor which medications are critical and which ones you can do without for a few days or weeks. Ask how to obtain an emergency supply of medication.
- Rotate medication; take older ones out of your survival kit and use them before the expiration date. Replace them with a fresh supply.
- If you require medications or treatments (e.g., methadone, dialysis, or chemotherapy), ask your health care provider what to do in an emergency.
- Find out if your health care provider maintains an electronic medical record that could be transferred in an emergency.

AT THE SHELTER PROVIDE DIRECT AND CLEAR COMMUNICATION

Take charge and practice how to quickly explain to people how best to assist you. Be prepared to give clear and concise instructions to rescue personnel and shelter staff.

- Specific directions should be given to anyone who may provide assistance; for example, “I have low-vision, let me take your left arm above the elbow and I’ll follow you out.”
- Practice giving instructions clearly and concisely in a few short phrases.

Additional Information

Please refer to the following resources for more descriptive information and ready-made checklists and guides to prepare for a disaster.

- **FEMA.** Provides step-by-step instructions on disaster preparedness for individuals with disabilities. Available at http://www.fema.gov/pdf/library/pfd_all.pdf.
- **American Red Cross.** Contains detailed instructions on how to prepare for disaster and includes a self-assessment toolkit. Available at http://www.redcross.org/museum/prepare_org/disabilities/disability.pdf.
- **Center for Disability Issues and the Health Professions.** A guide to emergency preparedness for people with disabilities and other activity limitations. It offers a thorough review of evacuation examples and needed information for different types of disabilities. Available at http://www.cdihp.org/evacuation/emergency_evacuation.pdf